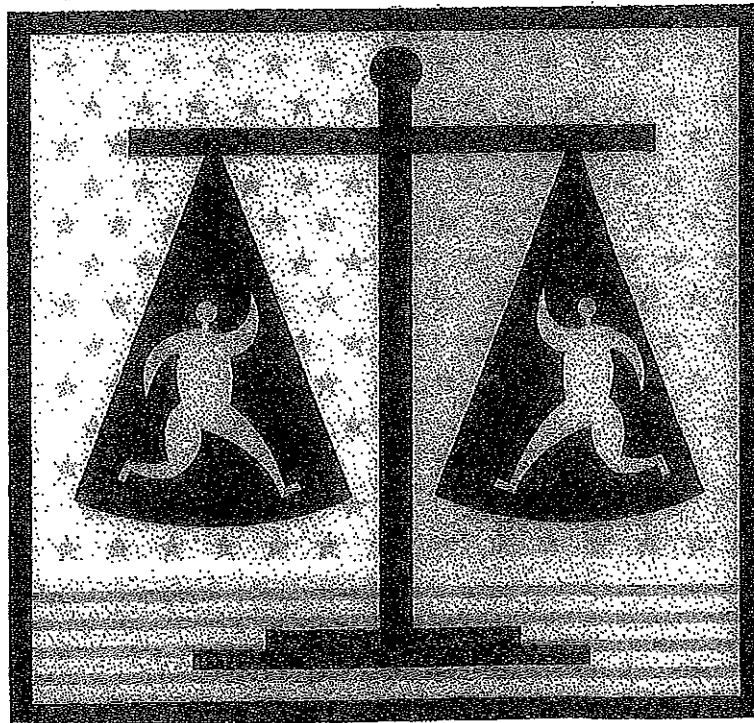


# What are dialectics?

Dialectics are the art of holding 2 or more things in balance that are in conflict, contrary, or mismatched and yet they are both real or true. It is about synthesizing things that seem to be in opposition. Dialectics are the kernel of truth in each person's perspective in an argument or dialogue. Dialectics are all the ironies and paradoxes in life. Being dialectical is about balancing competing needs. Below are some dialectics you can benefit from keeping in balance.

- Wants and needs
- Feelings and thoughts
- Problems and solutions
- Contemplation and action
- Recreation and responsibilities
- Being right and making mistakes
- Self-interest and interest in others
- Skill enhancement and self-acceptance
- Doing things alone and being able to ask for help



# **“Dialectical”**

## **Open-mind thinking.**

**Dialectical means that 2 *ideas* can both be true at the *same time*.**

- ❖ There is always more than one TRUE way to see a situation and more than one TRUE opinion, idea, thought, or dream.
- ❖ Two things that seem like (or are) opposites can *both* be true.
- ❖ All people have something unique, different, and worthy to teach us.
- ❖ A life worth living has both comfortable and uncomfortable aspects (happiness AND sadness; anger AND peace; hope AND discouragement; fear AND ease; etc).
- ❖ All points of view have both TRUE and FALSE within them.

**Examples:**

**You are right AND the other person is right.**

**You are doing the best that you can AND you need to try harder, do better, and be more motivated to change.**

**You can take care of yourself AND you need help and support from others.**

**Being dialectical means:**

- ❖ Letting go of self-righteous indignation.
- ❖ Letting go of “black and white”, “all or nothing” ways of seeing a situation.
- ❖ Looking for what is “left out” of your understanding of a situation.
- ❖ Finding a way to validate the other person’s point of view.
- ❖ Expanding your way of seeing things.
- ❖ Getting “unstuck” from standoffs and conflicts.
- ❖ Being more flexible and approachable.
- ❖ Avoiding assumptions and blaming.

# Guidelines for Dialectical Thinking

## Do:

Move away from “either-or” thinking to “**BOTH-AND**” thinking.  
Avoid extreme words: **always never, you make me.**

### Example:

Instead of saying: “Everyone always treats me unfairly,” say  
“Sometimes I am treated fairly AND at other times I am treated unfairly.”

Practice looking at ALL sides of a situation/points of view.  
Find the “kernel of truth” in every side.

Remember: NO ONE owns the truth. Be open and willing.

If you feel indignant or outraged, you are NOT being dialectical.

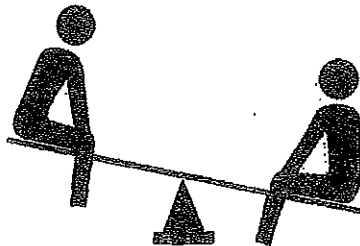
Use “I feel...” statements, instead of “You are...” statements.

Accept that different opinions can be legitimate, even if you do not agree with them:  
*“I can see your point of view even though I do not agree with it.”*

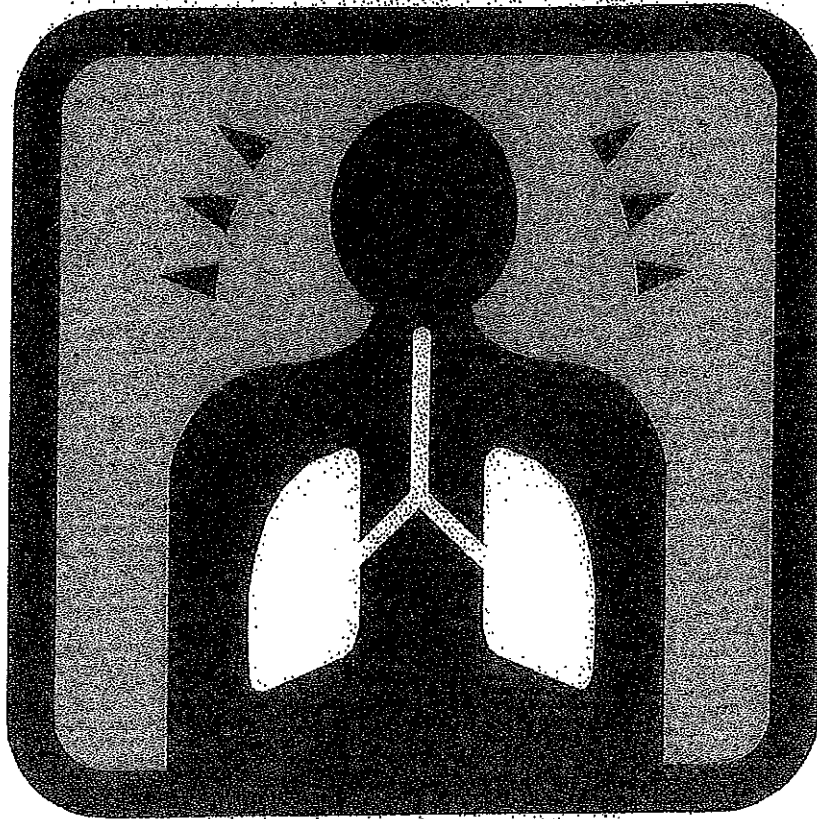
## Don't:

...assume that you know what others are thinking, check it out:  
*“What did you mean when you said...?”*

...expect others to know what you are thinking, be clear:  
*“What I'm trying to say is...”*



# Square Breathing



Do this skill mindfully, with full awareness, focusing only on your breathing. If you notice your mind wandering, just notice and bring yourself back to your breathing. By taking these long, slow, deep breaths, you will get more air into your lungs which will get more air to your muscles which will reduce tension and more air to your brain so you can think a little bit more clearly.

1. Breathe in while counting to 4.
2. Hold your breath while counting to 4.
3. Exhale while counting to 4.
4. Repeat 4 times.

Try "Square Breathing" at least 4 times a day.  
More often if it is useful.

# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about keeping your awareness in the current moment most of the time. It is about being present and aware in your life today. Mindfulness would say the past is the past and the future isn't here yet.

What has happened in the past has already happened. It can't be changed. It is possible to learn from the past, reflect on the past, or just have a memory of the past.

Since the future hasn't happened yet, there is no point in excessively worrying about what is to come. And yet, it is effective to plan and prepare for the future.

Being in the past and future mindfully or intentionally is optimal. If instead you live your life mind/essly in the past or future, you can miss out on really important things going on right now and end up regretting it later (or some other rationale).

Mindfulness would say: If you are going to spend time and energy focusing on the past and future; do it intentionally and with full awareness. However, spend most of your time in the present moment, in the here and now, in today. This allows you to fully experience your life as it is happening, rather than what it was or what it might be.

How might practicing mindfulness help you achieve your goals?

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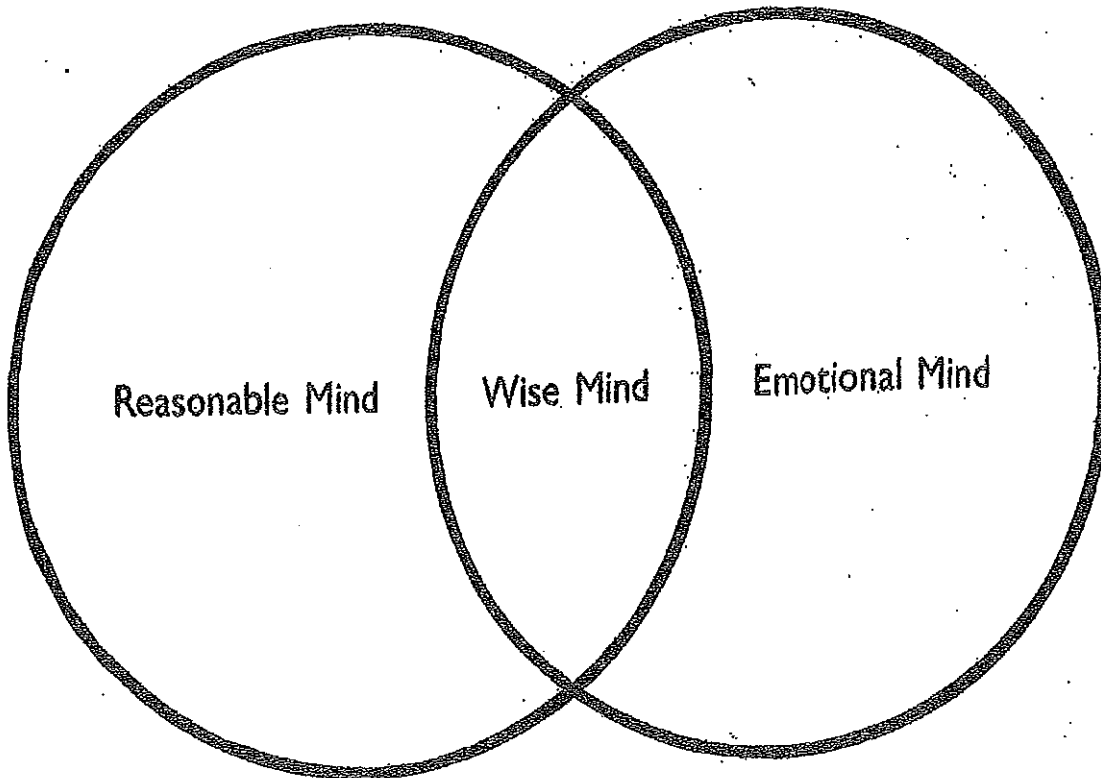
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# MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 1

## Taking Hold of Your Mind:

### States of Mind



# Core Mindfulness--**HOW** Skills

*Practice to use these all at the same time*

## Non-Judgmental Stance

- ◆ **SEE, BUT DON'T EVALUATE.** Take a non-judgmental stance. Just the facts. Focus on the "what", not the "good" or "bad", the "terrible", the "should" or "should not".
- ◆ **UNGLUE YOUR OPINIONS** from the facts, from the "who, what, when, and where.
- ◆ **ACCEPT** each moment, each event as a blanket spread out on the lawn accepts both the rain and the sun, each leaf that falls upon it.
- ◆ **ACKNOWLEDGE** the helpful, the wholesome, but don't judge it. Acknowledge the harmful, the unwholesome, but don't judge it.
- ◆ When you find yourself judging, **DON'T JUDGE YOUR JUDGING.**

## One Mindfully in the Moment

- ◆ **DO ONE THING AT A TIME.** When you are eating, eat. When you are walking, walk. When you are working, work. When you are in a group, or a conversation, focus your attention on the very moment you are in with the other person. *Do each thing with all of your attention.*
- ◆ If other actions, thoughts, or strong feelings distract you, **LET GO OF DISTRACTIONS** and go back to what you are doing—again, and again, and again.
- ◆ **CONCENTRATE YOUR MIND.** If you find you are doing two things at once, stop and go back to one thing at a time.

## Effectively

- ◆ **FOCUS ON WHAT WORKS.** Do what needs to be done in each situation in order to meet your larger goals. Stay away from thoughts of "right", "wrong", "should", "should not", "fair" and "unfair".
- ◆ **PLAY BY THE RULES.** Act as skillfully as you can, meeting the needs of the situation you are in, not the situation you **WISH** you were in.
- ◆ **LET GO** of vengeance, useless anger, and righteousness that hurts you and doesn't work.

# Core Mindfulness Skills—WHAT Skills

*Take hold of your mind*

## Observe!

- ◆ Be curious about what you feel.
- ◆ Just notice how you feel, without trying to make feelings stronger, or weaker, go away, or last longer.
- ◆ See how long your feeling lasts, and if it changes.
- ◆ Notice how feelings flow in and out of your body like waves.
- ◆ What comes through your senses? Touch, smell, sight, sound, taste.
- ◆ Be like a non-stick pan, letting things slide off of your body and your emotions.

## Describe

- ◆ Use words to describe your experience.
- ◆ Use "fact" words, call a thought "just a thought", call a feeling "just a feeling."
- ◆ Use words that everyone would agree with.
- ◆ Don't paint a colorful picture with words, or magnify a situation with words. Try to avoid emotional words.
- ◆ Try to let go of your emotions about being "right" or about someone else being "wrong" while searching for words to describe.

## Participate

- ◆ Get "lost" in an activity.
- ◆ Let go of your sense of time while you are doing something.
- ◆ Allow yourself to be natural in the situation.
- ◆ Practice your skills until they become a part of you.



# Mindfulness

How might practicing mindfulness help you act more effectively in your daily life when challenges arise?

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What is hard about practicing mindfulness:

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Strategies to overcome what is hard about practicing mindfulness:

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What is useful about practicing mindfulness:

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Strategies to increase mindfulness in daily life:

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